



"When health fraud turned into 'alternative medicine' and then evolved into 'complementary and alternative medicine', and then reached its final form of 'integrative medicine' the language war was lost. That's a large part of how quackery became accepted as mainstream." - [Dr David Gorski](#)

## Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

### Chiropractic

Chiropractors are almost exclusively employed in solo or group small businesses, many of which have websites to promote their services. Friends of Science in Medicine (FSM) has documented [50 websites](#) where chiropractors have claimed that they could 'treat' a wide range of childhood illnesses and over 300 that made claims that chiropractic is '[safe](#)' and/or '[effective](#)'. If these claims related to therapeutic goods instead of services they would be breaching a number of sections of the [Therapeutic Goods Act](#).

In June 2015, FSM met with Mr Martin Fletcher, CEO, Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority (AHPRA), to discuss a range of concerns regarding registered practitioners, including chiropractors. FSM hand-submitted the reports described above. Following on from this meeting, Mr Fletcher invited FSM to meet with the various Boards. The first meeting, in August, was attended by members of the Chiropractic Board of Australia (CBA), Mr Fletcher and AHPRA's legal representatives. This was a very productive meeting, where it was agreed that collaboration should be ongoing, with FSM taking on the vital role of passing on notifications and evidence that we are alerted to.

There are many rational chiropractors who exclusively practice within the musculoskeletal and sports injury domain, and do not hold to the antiquated models of 'subluxation' or 'nerve interference'. FSM is aware that the ra-

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PO Box 631, Morayfield, QLD, 4506

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tional sector of the profession appreciates efforts to bring all of the chiropractic profession into a evidence-based paradigm. In the meeting, FSM encouraged APHRA and the CBA to take a leadership role via their regular communiqué, using the recent successful model on vaccination. It was suggested that consumer protection could be improved if their members were given clear direction by the CBA.

With some universities attempting to remove pseudoscience from their chiropractic curriculums, FSM raised concerns about the hundreds of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses which support pseudoscience.

Examples mentioned were the '[Activator](#)' and '[Mindd Forums](#)' – courses supporting the [concept of 'subluxation'](#) as the cause of childhood disease, and courses targeting [new parents](#).

The Board informed FSM that they had completed a review of CPD standards and guidelines and that their report is currently before the health minister.

Also discussed were:

- widening the definition of 'harm', to include financial and emotional harm;
- claims that spinal manipulation can alter the course of childhood diseases and disorders, and;
- excessive processing time (and costs) for complaints processing—compared against the outcome and timeliness of similar complaints processed by the [Therapeutic Goods Administration Complaints Resolution Panel](#).

It was a positive meeting with all concerns acknowledged.

The care of children and infants was nominated as the topic for discussion at the next meeting, to be held in early 2016. We thank our [Friends](#) for reinforcing the work of FSM by submitting their own complaints to AHPRA about the claims made on chiropractic websites

## Osteopathy Board

Taught at [Southern Cross University \(SCU\)](#) and endorsed by "Osteopathy in the cranial field (OCF)", is a biologically implausible intervention widely promoted as an effective treatment for a wide range of childhood illnesses. It is based on a misunderstanding of human physiology and anatomy and is rejected by evidence-based osteopaths.

FSM wrote to Dr Nikole Grbin, Committee Chair & Board Member, Osteopathy Board of Australia (OBA) regarding OCF and requested that they issue a communiqué which would include the following:

- a statement rejecting OCF teaching and practice;
- details of the regulatory framework relating to paediatric practice, and;
- details of the accreditation process used to determine how university courses prepare osteopaths for paediatric practice.

We asked that the OBA write to SCU noting their position on OCF, requesting that it be removed from their curriculum. We also requested that they ask OA to stop advertising the [Sutherland Cranial Teaching Foundation](#) OCF courses and to stop approving CPD hours for anything associated with it.

FSM received a response from the Board stating that they do not "endorse specific techniques or procedures" and that "in the absence of substantive evidence that this treatment modality presents a risk of harm, the Board does not intend to release a communiqué on this matter."

## Traditional Chinese Medicine

FSM wrote to the Chair, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) alerting him to an anti-vaccination seminar which targeted TCM practitioners. It presented a view that vaccination is harmful, that homeopathic vaccination (also referred to as homoeoprophylaxis (HP)) is effective, and aimed to teach participants how to incorporate HP into their practice. The course was to be presented by a homeopath who holds the belief that "Homoeoprophylaxis [is a] Proven Alternative to Vaccination" and who claims that there is "a considerable amount of clinical evidence showing that HP provides a high level of protection against targeted infectious diseases."

Advertised as a "Professional Issues CPD Event", the seminar attracted five Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Points which participants were awarded in three ways - by attending the seminar, via attendance through a "Live/Interactive Webinar" and by purchasing the recorded seminar.

We requested that the CPD hours be removed from the seminar and that TCM members be notified of this action.

**FSM received a response from the Chair of the Osteopathic Board that the course had been cancelled.**

# Congratulations to our NZ Friends!

Congratulation to the NZ based [Society for Science Based Healthcare](#), who have had over 200 successful advertising complaints upheld by their [Advertising Standards Authority \(ASA\)](#) – an 86% success rate. Complaints are against a range of media outlets including television, newspapers and websites and relate to false and misleading claims for both therapeutic goods and services.

Keep up the good work! (The complaints can be viewed here: <http://asa.sbh.nz/?sbh>)

## Universities

### Murdoch University

FSM applauds the efforts of the academics at Murdoch University to maintain an evidence-based chiropractic degree. In particular, we appreciate the importance of the ["about your treatment"](#) link on their website, which helps communicate the lack of evidence for spinal manipulation in the treatment of babies and children.

FSM wrote to Associate Professor Bruce Walker, Head, Chiropractic Program & Associate Dean (Research), School of Health Professions, requesting that he includes warnings about a range of belief-based chiropractic interventions.

We received a positive response stating that their chiropractic staff now "includes a medical doctor, a PhD anatomist, an epidemiologist, various specialists who teach basic sciences (like pathologists, biochemists, etc.) and chiropractors, most of whom have or are in the process of attaining other advanced degrees".

They will also be publishing on their website:

"Murdoch University does not teach any of the named chiropractic technique systems or therapies such as Applied Kinesiology, Sacro-occipital technique, Activator methods®, Functional Neurology or Gonstead analysis, and they are not used in the Clinic."

### Victoria University

FSM wrote to Professor Peter Dawkins, Vice-Chancellor and President, Victoria University, acknowledging the progress they have recently made to remove pseudoscientific concepts from their osteopathy degree. We asked them to inform the community about two particular pseudoscientific techniques.

Widely used by osteopaths, 'Osteopathy of the Cranial Field' (OCF) (also called Sacro Occipital Technique (SOT) or Cranio-sacral therapy), makes false and misleading claims relating to the treatment of babies and children. Thousands of osteopathy services on children under 15 have attracted Medicare benefits.

Another belief-based intervention is 'Visceral Manipulation' (VM) where practitioners claim that they can detect 'rhythmic motions' from the intestines and other internal organs which they then 'manipulate' to supposedly change the course of many diseases and disorders.

Osteopathy Australia, the peak osteopathy association, supports both OCF & VM and advertises courses to both students and experienced practitioners. They also approve continuing professional development (CPD) hours for both these implausible and discredited interventions, which, due to the limitations of the National Law, the Osteopathy Board of Australia, is unable to stop.

### RMIT

FSM wrote to Professor Charlie Xue, Head of School, Health Sciences, RMIT University, asking that he follow the lead of the World Health Organization (WHO) and review the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) curriculum, taking on board the results of adverse Cochrane reviews of the acupuncture literature.

The Cochrane Collaboration has a seat on the World Health Organization (WHO) Assembly. Forty Cochrane reviews do not support claims that acupuncture is clinically effective for any disorder or disease.

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Professor Xue has a role as an expert on the Advisory Panel, Traditional & Complementary Medicine at WHO. The link on their website, referred to by many acupuncturists as evidence of efficacy of acupuncture, was removed in 2014 by Dr Edward Kelley, Director, Service Delivery and Safety, because the "information in the report is outdated and is no longer appropriate to be posted there."

We asked Professor Xue to review RMIT's acupuncture curriculum and amend it to reflect the outcome of Cochrane Reviews. We also asked him to include a Q&A section on Acupuncture/TCM on the RMIT website to educate both past and present students, and the community, about the real evidence-base for acupuncture.

Professor Xue responded:

"evidence-based healthcare is a strategic focus for the academic development for all academic disciplines in the School"

He stated that he would pass our letter to the Discipline Leader (Chinese Medicine) for his information and follow up. To date we have had no further response. We shall keep our supporters informed.

Of particular concern are [training videos on how acupuncture works](#) published on the RMIT website and claims made for [cupping therapy](#), [acupuncture and auriculotherapy](#) demonstrated by TCM practitioners at the RMIT Open days. This is RMIT sanctioned hocus pocus and an example of an institution making money out of false medical claims and teaching at the expense of public health.

FSM also wrote to RMIT to request that they also include a similar Q and A session to [about your treatment](#)" published on the Murdoch University website.

### Central Queensland University

FSM wrote to Professor Scott Bowman, Vice-Chancellor & President, Central Queensland University (CQU), following the appointment of their new Chiropractic Head of School, Dr Sharyn Eaton. This is, we believe, an opportunity to stop the indoctrination of CQU students and for Dr Eaton to move the course towards evidence-based chiropractic.

The catalyst for the formation of FSM in 2011 was the appointment of CQU's former Head of School, Bachelor of Science, Chiropractic,

who was known to hold beliefs in 'fundamentalist' chiropractic. As a supporter of 'subluxation theory' and 'Paediatric Chiropractic', he may have included these implausible concepts in the chiropractic program. The WCCS National Conference, featured on the CQU website, for example, was sponsored by Chiropractic4kids, a high profile subluxation-based organisation targeting new families and children.

None of the 'natural therapies', including Applied Kinesiology (AK), recently reviewed by the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC), were shown to work. With CQU being a major sponsor of the [International College of Applied Kinesiology \(ICAK\)](#)'s conference for the past three years, and with the conference being attended by a number of first-year chiropractic students, it is possible students have been encouraged to embrace this implausible intervention.

FSM has not received a response from CQU.

### Deakin University

In "Admission to the Deakin Medical Course for domestic applicants", under the heading heading ["Prior clinical experience in a health discipline"](#), alternative practitioners "who have completed one year fulltime of clinical practice as a registered health professional receive a 2% bonus".

We wrote to Professor Jon Watson, Head of School, Faculty of Health, urging his admission process be reviewed, as, far from being a positive, a year or more of unscientific practice might diminish the suitability of these candidates.

We received a response that a working party is currently investigating "all aspects of admission and selection to our medical degree, including prior clinical experience and bonus-ing" chaired by Deakin's Professor of Orthopaedics, Richard Page, "with academic, clinician and student representation."

Our letter has been forwarded to Professor Page for inclusion in their working party's deliberations, with recommendations expected by early 2016.

### Macquarie University

FSM understands that the Macquarie, University (MQ) chiropractic degree is to continue, with no end date in sight.



We wrote to Professor Bruce Dowton, Vice-Chancellor, MQ, requesting the inclusion of a similar Q and A session to that published on the Murdoch University website.

and CQU with the same suggestion. No responses have been received at this time.

These universities have also not responded.

FSM also wrote to Victoria University, RMIT

## Chiropractic and Osteopathy

Under the [Medicare Chronic Disease Management \(MCDM\)](#) scheme, the past five years have seen a 70% increase in the number of paediatric referrals by GPs to [chiropractors](#) and [osteopaths](#). This accounts for over 10,000 referrals. With insufficient evidence of benefit to support these interventions, FSM believe that alternative practitioners have nothing to offer children and indeed may place them in danger.

FSM wrote to the Chair of the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA), Dr Steve Hambleton regarding the inclusion of the treatment of children under this scheme.

We had previously written to Federal Health Minister, Hon Sussan Ley MP after she announced a review of alternative medical services, but the response from her department was disappointing, with responsibility for the use of these Medicare items being placed on GPs. We requested that the use of item numbers for chiropractic and osteopathy be restricted to patients over the age of 18. (Chiropractic item numbers are 10964 & 81345 and osteopathic item numbers 10966 & 81350).

## Acupuncture

Acupuncture was unfortunately excluded from the Chief Medical Officer's review into Natural Therapies, as the majority of acupuncturists, including Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioners, are registered with AHPRA. A number of the National Boards approve continuing development hours for acupuncture including [Podiatry, Chiropractic, Osteopathy and the Medical Board](#).

Forty Cochrane reviews have failed to support acupuncture as being clinically effective for any condition. From July 2009 to June 2014, [over \\$110 million](#) was spent on Medicare benefits for GP-referred acupuncture services, including over \$1million on children under 15.

FSM sent this acupuncture information to the media. This resulted in several interviews, such as "[Sussan Ley's Medicare review could help patients, as well as the budget](#)", which remained in the top five Readers' most viewed for the weekend 25-26 April.

"[Call to cull acupuncture from MBS](#)" was published in Australian Doctor. This led to a response from a GP/acupuncturist, who claimed that the World Health Organization (WHO) endorsed acupuncture. However, as previously reported, the WHO has removed the link endorsing acupuncture's effectiveness and are "convening an international meeting to review the evidence for acupuncture to which FSM has been invited".

We remain concerned that medical doctors are using this discredited link as evidence for the effectiveness of acupuncture.



# Medicare

FSM does not advocate the banning of any non-science based interventions, but these services should **not** be subsidised by taxpayers. Medicare should not be paying for alternative therapies which have no basis in science and which have the potential to cause harm. Being able to claim rebates for alternative interventions, such as acupuncture, paediatric chiropractic & osteopathy undeservedly legitimises these procedures.

## Removal of Medicare acupuncture items

FSM wrote to Professor Bruce Robinson AM, Chair, Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Taskforce, asking that Medicare Item numbers 173, 193, 195, 197 and 199 be removed until such time as sufficient evidence demonstrates the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture for pain, illness or any other disorder.

## X-rays

According to the USA based online patient resource, [Choosing Wisely](#), imaging for back pain do not get patients better faster, are expensive and can also lead to surgery and other unnecessary treatments. In 2013/14, Medicare funded nearly one million X-rays and CT scans on lower spines [at a cost of \\$128 million](#). Many spinal x-rays are ordered by chiropractors. The magazine also suggests that if patients still have pain after a few weeks, they may want to ask their doctor about other treatments for lower- back pain.

Suggested treatments include:

- Physiotherapy
- Chiropractic care
- Acupuncture
- Yoga
- Massage
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy
- Progressive muscle relaxation



# Pharmacies

## Australian Pharmacy Liaison Forum

Our Pharmacy Facilitator, Ian Carr, sent a letter to the Australian Pharmacy Liaison Forum (APLF), the independent group of representatives from all key pharmacy organisations, regarding the sale and endorsement of homeopathic remedies. He pointed out that the pharmacy profession's Code of Ethics (PSA, 2014) requires pharmacists to ensure they provide "medicines meeting appropriate standards of quality, safety and efficacy".

A survey by the Auspharm e-newsletter (24th March, 2015 --- 163 polled) revealed the concerning figure of 70% of community pharmacies stocking homeopathic products and 15.5%

actively recommending them. A mere 3% had noted the NHMRC recommendation and had ceased stocking homeopathic preparations.

Carr asked the Forum to reconsider placing the topic of the recommendation and sale by pharmacies of homeopathics on its next meeting agenda for urgent consideration and to: "urge the leadership of all Pharmacy's professional bodies to establish, through the Forum, a united and unequivocal position on the sale of homeopathics in pharmacy, and that each of the APLF constituent organisations develop and publish their own statement of policy on homeopathy so that the regulating professional bodies including, AHPRA and the Pharmacy Councils have the appropriate industry guidance for future considerations."

FSM takes the view that the promotion of non-evidence based medicine will erode the reputation of Australian pharmacy at a time when the profession is seeking to increase its roles in primary care.

Carr's letter was endorsed by 14 pharmacists and pharmacologists who support the efforts of FSM in campaigning for the use of the best scientific evidence to inform the best clinical decisions and outcomes in our health system.

On 15 September, the [Pharmaceutical Society of Australia](#) (PSA) published a

'Complementary Medicines Position Paper' which states that complementary medicines may be used as an adjunctive therapy with conventional medicines, provided there is evidence to support their use. It also states that the "PSA does not support the sale of homeopathy products in pharmacy". Their position is that "pharmacists must use their professional judgment **to** prevent the supply of products with evidence of no effect". FSM considers this is a good outcome and asks responsible pharmacists to remove homeopathic remedies from the shelves and to focus on ["scientifically based treatments backed by clear clinical evidence."](#)

## Dentistry

Water fluoridation is one of the great public health achievements of the 20th century. The practice is endorsed by all Federal, State and Territory Health Departments, and by every major health and scientific authority in Australia. However, in Queensland, a roll-back of fluoridation legislation by the previous government has allowed some regional councils to opt out of water fluoridation.

Australian and overseas research consistently shows that fluoridation reduces tooth decay in both children and adults. FSM recently sent a letter to the Queensland Premier, the Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, on behalf of the Queensland branch of the Australian & New Zealand Society of Paediatric Dentistry (ANZSPD) raising concerns about the dental health of Queensland children.

ANZSPD joins with other health authorities in urging the "Queensland government to ensure that as many Queensland children as possible enjoy the dental health benefits of water fluoridation."

On 30 August, the Telegraph newspapers in Sydney launched their pro-fluoridation '[Bite Back campaign](#)' with a front page photo, two page spread, editorial and opinion piece in the Sunday edition. The newspaper notes that many large Australian towns and cities remain unfluoridated, and argues for all Australian towns with populations over 1,000 to be fluoridated in line with recommendations from the National Oral Health Plan. To achieve this aim, it urges state governments to take over responsibility for water fluoridation decisions from local councils, and asks the federal government to tie dental funding to water fluoridation.



The Telegraph condemns the irrational anti-fluoridation scaremongering from well funded and organized groups (including Queenslanders for Safe Air Food and Water and the Fluoride Action Network) who use strategies that range from using social media to inundating local councils with hundreds of emails. Orchestrated networks may also be initiated by overseas anti-fluoride campaigners, working with Australian celebrities and alternative medicine practitioners. The campaign insists that public health policy be based on high quality scientific evidence.

We agree.

# Therapeutic Goods Administration

## Health World Ltd

FSM submitted a complaint to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) against Health World Ltd, the high-profile manufacturer of both ['Ethical Nutrients'](#) and ['Inner Health Plus'](#), for their in vitro diagnostic devices. These 'low risk' goods came under the jurisdiction of the TGA on 1 July 2010, when sponsors of existing devices were given four years—later extended by an additional year—to apply for listings on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG). Despite assurances by the TGA that the devices have not been accepted onto the ARTG, they continue to be sold through Metagenics, their 'practitioner only' division, along with training on how to use them.

Metagenics offer a range of complementary medicines and 'clinical testing tools' which they claim ["provide a range of clinically effective tools and tests to help you develop goals with your patients to improve their health potential"](#). One of these is the Hemaview, a live blood analysis (LBA) device.

Nine documents were submitted in the complaint, including a Metagenics events calendar (which details their 2015 courses for both Australia and New Zealand), expert opinion on both LBA and LBA software, registration details, descriptions of the claims made for the Hemaview, including practitioner handouts and claims made on 200 practitioner websites. The courses are only available to Metagenics members, with the Hemaview costing up to \$8,244.50.

All the so-called clinical testing devices sold

by Metagenics, including LBA, were shown, in the [FSM Pathology Recommendation](#) report, to be invalid.

The TGA have promised FSM an answer to our letters and to their inaction on these matters dating back over a year. FSM contacted the TGA and was given a verbal apology for having overlooked our complaints.

A reply is pending.

## Pathology

FSM wrote to the TGA on 14 March, 2014 regarding "the protection of Australians from bogus 'pathology' tests". We raised our concerns about a number of electro-dermal devices that were on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG), including the EIS Body Scanner (ARTG No. 171970) which was being promoted as a "Full 3D body scan of all major systems and organs" and used for preventative medicine as it shows 'organs at risk'. This device is no longer listed on the ARTG.

While this is a good outcome, the Insight Subluxation device (ARTG No. 159476) promoted as "a wonderful machine which provides all chiropractors with a tool of compelling power when used to diagnose vertebral subluxations" and the BICOM (ARTG No. 138918) promoted for "Nicotine addiction, allergies & Intolerances, chemical toxicity or sensitiviey, heavy metal toxicity, radiation, digestive complaints and IBS, viral and bacterial infections, candida, cold sores, headaches and migraines, muscle aches and pains, hormone related contidions, behavioral or emotional problems" remain listed.

## Maurice Blackmore Chair in 'Integrative Medicine' - University of Sydney

On 27 May 2015, the University of Sydney announced that they had established the ["Maurice Blackmore Chair in Integrative Medicine"](#), honouring homeopathy supporter and [naturopath Maurice Blackmore](#), the founder of Blackmores, "Australia's leading natural health brand".

FSM has stressed that it supports research into the safety and efficacy of alternative interventions, with the qualifiers that the research is truly independent; carries a plausible hypothesis; has not already been adequately tested in the scientific literature; and uses sound methodology. Otherwise, that it meets the normal criteria for scientific funding. The announce-



ment of the Chair generated considerable media attention, prompting FSM to publish and circulate a [position statement](#).

We received comments from concerned University of Sydney Medical School academics:

"Having a Chair established by one of our foremost Sandstone Universities will give this pseudo-field of medical practice an unwarranted imprimatur of respectability that will only encourage more patients to wander off into the medical wilderness.";

The University may as well call it a Chair in 'Non-evidence-based Medicine'; and,

Much of what is done in the name of 'integrative medicine' is ethically dubious."

From the UK, former professor of complementary medicine at Exeter, Professor Edzard Ernst, wrote an open letter to the Dean of Medicine:

"There are important problems to consider. By accepting Blackmore's money, you have, perhaps inadvertently, given credit to a commercially driven business empire. As you probably know, Blackmores have a reputation of being 'a bit on the cavalier side' when it comes to rules and regulations. This is evidenced, for instance, by the number of complaints that have been upheld against them by the Australian authorities.

For these reasons, the creation of the new chair is not just a step towards generating research, it could (and almost inevitably will) be seen as a boost for quackery. It is foremost this aspect which might endanger the reputation of your university, I am afraid.

My own experience over the last two decades has taught me to be cautious and sceptical regarding the motives of many involved in the multi-billion alternative medicine business."

## National Association of Testing Authorities / Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) is the authority which provides independent assurance of technical competence through a proven network of best-practice pathology experts for customers who require confidence in the delivery of their products and services. They also provide assessment, accreditation and training services to laboratories and technical facilities throughout Australia and internationally.

To ensure that all tests being used for clinical purposes have a demonstrated evidence base, the Therapeutic Goods Administration's amendments to the new regulatory framework for in-vitro diagnostic medical devices (IVDs) (17 October 2014) included the following:

["Laboratories that have a TGA GMP licence or NATA accreditation to ISO 15189 will be required to apply for inclusion of their Class 4 in-house IVDs in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods \(ARTG\) by 30 June 2017."](#)

The [FSM Pathology Recommendation](#) report (October 2013) identified a wide range of invalid tests, including Live Blood Analysis, hair

analysis, electro-dermal screening and some food allergy tests. A number of unaccredited laboratories in Australia offer some of these tests. Examples include [Healthscope Functional Pathology](#), [Australian Biologics](#), [Nutri-path Integrative Pathology](#), and [Safe Analytical Laboratories](#). These laboratories are currently unregulated and are not required to be accredited because they do not access MBS funding. Patients pay the full cost of their testing.

FSM wrote to NATA and The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA), concerned about how they intended to assess the unregulated laboratories as the TGA deadline draws closer. FSM recommended a staged process validating the accuracy and appropriate use of these tests as the most efficient and effective means of doing the assessments, as invalid tests would not pass the first component of the assessment. If NATA and RCPA

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agree to our recommendation, then we believe it will be prudent for them to advise the unaccredited laboratories of the proposed process.

The National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council (NPAAC) is responsible for defining the benchmark against which laboratories are assessed. However, they have no say in the assessment process itself. This will be raised at a meeting of the NPAAC, RCPA and NATA in early July.

According to a concerned pathologist who wrote to FSM:

"There is the complex problem of legitimate NATA accredited pathology labs accepting request forms from naturopaths (and charging the patients as they can't charge Medicare). They order all types of ridiculous tests such as vitamin levels, adrenal hormones, porphyrins, G6PD, etc. There is financial incentive to the pathology lab to provide this service.

The difficulty is that we are providing these results to someone who we know has no qualification to correctly interpret them and by doing so we are validating the pseudoscience and patient deception.

On multiple occasions we have found serious life threatening results and have had to call them through and explain it to the requesting naturopath...Who truly has no idea.

In my opinion, naturopaths should not be able to order any pathology tests - is there any way to address this?"

**Comment from FSM.** To our knowledge there is currently no legislation or agency to control this. There is an urgent need for NATA, RCPA and NPAAC to put in place proper standards in pathology laboratories and stop the misuse of tests by alternative therapists.

## ACCC—Chiropractic complaints

Following a submission documenting nearly 200 complaints of false and misleading claims for chiropractic by one of our supporters to the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), Scott Gregson, Executive General Manager, Consumer Enforcement, said the ACCC are continuing to "engage with AHPRA and others to assist in determining whether we would look to take up any of the matters". An update is expected shortly.

## Balmain Hospital Homeopathy Clinic

Following the release of the NHMRC homeopathy review, which found ["there is no reliable evidence that homeopathy is effective for treating health conditions"](#), FSM wrote to Dr Teresa Anderson, Chief Executive, Sydney Local Health District, asking that homeopathy services at Balmain Hospital be discontinued. We forwarded her [several opinion pieces](#) from the director of the Balmain clinic in response to our criticisms re: homeopathy. FSM pointed out that it is not acceptable for a doctor who offers services from a NSW public hospital, to reject the findings of the NHMRC.

## The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education & Training

FSM [wrote to the Hon Christopher Pyne](#) about our concern that extremely mixed messages are emerging from government. They are the source of conflicting, and even dangerous legislation which not only flies in the face of scientific credibility, but also imposes huge and unnecessary costs on the country at a time when prudent checks to expenditure are needed and being advocated by the government.



While medical research is badly needed, it is contradictory for government to cite the value of medical research and contribute millions towards it, while, at the same time, permitting large amounts of tax-payers' money to be spent on rebates for pseudoscientific and demonstrably unscientific practices masquerading as health care. Homeopathy is just one of them.

We received a [disappointing response](#) from Minister Pyne. He referred to the role of the Tertiary Education Quality & Standards Agency (TEQSA) which is only required to provide "national consistency in the way higher education providers are registered, courses are accredited and the quality of the system is monitored" for accreditation. Courses are approved on "the content of the course of study [which] is drawn from a substantial, coherent and current body of knowledge and scholarship in one or more academic disciplines and includes the study of relevant theoretical frameworks and research findings". Alternative medicine courses, including homeopathy, are regarded by TEQSA as meeting this standard. He also added "it is not a requirement that a higher education course only teach something that is generally accepted as scientifically proven".

This implies that health courses that are not based on proven science, are acceptable to the minister. Only homeopaths are called upon to assess a course in homeopathy!

Vocational education and training (VET) delivery is tax-payer funded. It entitles qualified Australians access to subsidised VET approved training, including courses in alternative therapies, by registered training organisations (RTO's). The Government has no role in which training products are offered. This is determined by a number of criteria, including student demand.

## Community Services & Health Industry Skill Council

FSM received notification from the Community Services and Development & Technicians and Health Support (CHC&HLT) about their pre-release of a range of Training Packages.

This includes details of the following:

- Diploma of Kinesiology;
- Certificate IV Massage Therapy, including modules: "Develop aromatherapy practice", "Source and prepare aromatherapy products";
- Diploma of Reflexology including modules: "Perform reflexology health assessments" & "Provide therapeutic reflexology treatments";
- Diploma of Clinical Aromatherapy, including: "Perform aromatherapy health assessments" & "Provide therapeutic aromatherapy treatments";
- Diploma of Shiatsu and Oriental Therapies;
- Advanced Diploma of Ayurveda;
- Diploma of Ayurvedic Lifestyle Consultation.

Under the current approval systems, there is no effective way to challenge these courses.

## Australian Skeptics National Convention

FSM CEO, Loretta Marron, will be speaking at the [Australian Skeptics National Convention](#) (16-18 October 2015) in Brisbane, Queensland. A cancer survivor herself, she will be talking, in her presentation titled "Crazy & Cruel Cancer Cures", about individual alternative health practitioners and medical doctors who promote alternative cancer cures and about the failure of our Government to protect these vulnerable patients. The keynote speaker will be Nobel laureate, astrophysicist [Prof Brian Schmidt](#). Other speakers include U.S. psychologist and writer for Science Based Medicine, [Professor James Coyne](#), and former Director of the U.S. National Centre for Science Education, [Dr Eugenie Scott](#).

Tickets for the convention can be purchased here: <http://brisbaneskeptics.org/convention/>

## Thank you to:

### Edzard Ernst

As mentioned in the article on page 8, [Professor Edzard Ernst](#), concerned about the new Blackmores Chair of Integrative Medicine, published an [Open letter to Professor Bruce Robinson](#) Dean, Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney, on his website. FSM thank Professor Ernst for "taking the time to share your experience and concerns with Bruce Robinson and the broader community " and for his continued support.

### Warwick Anderson

FSM wrote to [Professor Warwick Anderson](#) on his retirement, thanking him for his contribution to 'good science in medicine'. Throughout his career, he enhanced Australia's commitment to the importance of evidence-based medicine considerably.

We specifically mentioned his recent role as Chair of the Homeopathy Review Panel for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), which concluded that "there is no reliable evidence that homeopathy is effective for treating health conditions". For FSM, this was not unexpected and was a welcome demonstration that objective assessment of health interventions is the basis of good health policies.

### Dr Steve Roberts

FSM has been using Facebook since 2012 to communicate our work and relevant articles to Facebook users. Our Page is "Liked" by over 1,800 individuals, but we are looking at ways to expand our audience. With a donation from [Dr Steve Roberts](#) we conducted a small Facebook Advertising trial which will help us determine the most cost effective way to increase our exposure and generate more followers and Friends.

### Australian Medical Association

The US television show Dr Oz, is estimated to reach 4 million viewers per day globally, and shown daily in Australia. FSM wrote to the Australian Medical Association (AMA) thanking them for taking [a tough stance](#) against pseudoscience and medical misinformation being foisted on the public, with specific criticism of the "Dr Oz" program and its presenter.

## A Humorous Look at Alternative Medicine

### Dara O'Briain



[Dara O'Briain with home truths about quackery](#)

### Armstrong and Miller



[24 hour Aromatherapists](#)



# Publications and other media

## Scientific Papers

Professor Susan Davis et al, [Use of complementary and alternative medicines for menopausal symptoms in Australian women aged 40–65 years](#) Med J Aust 2015; 203 (3): 146.

## Book Reviews

Edzard Ernst

[A Scientist in Wonderland](#)

Timothy Caulfield

[Is Gwyneth Paltrow wrong about everything?](#)

## 'The Bitter Pill' - Australasian Science

Michael Foley

[Stepping out of the Dental Dark Ages](#)

Sue Ieraci

[“Alternative” Is Not a Compliment](#)

Loretta Marron

[“Integrative Medicine” Has No Place in Universities](#)

Marko Petrovic

[Pseudoscience in Sport: If it's Legal It Probably Doesn't Work](#)

## The Conversation

Clare Collins

[Health Check: four reasons to have another cup of coffee](#)

Mick Vagg

[Concerns about chiros are about quality and safety, not some phony turf war](#)

Simon Chapman

[No, we're not all being pickled in deadly radiation from smartphones & wifi](#)  
[What if Sydney University's complementary medicine research shows it's useless?](#)

Ken Harvey

[Viewpoints: should universities accept funding from industry?](#)

## MJA Insight

[Sue Ieraci—Find the evidence](#)

[Ken Harvey: The right touch](#)

## Edzard.ernst

[Chiropractic spinal manipulation = placebo!](#)

[A charlatan's dictionary of medical research](#)

[Herbal does not mean harmless](#)

[Where is the line between meaningless and unethical research?](#)

[Reiki is nonsense and further research should be discouraged](#)

## I2P

Loretta Marron

[When it comes to cancer – who are the brave ones?](#)

[The truth about herbal ‘medicines’](#)

[Wondrous Wiggly Worms!](#)

## Science-Based Medicine

John Snyder

[Don't just stand there, do nothing! The difference between science-based medicine and quackery](#)

David Gorski

[Should placebos be used in randomized controlled trials of surgical interventions?](#)

[An Industry of Worthless Acupuncture Studies](#)

Jann Bellamy

[Six Key Elements of A Modern Chiropractic Practice Act](#)

Mark Crislip

[Chiropractic Nose Balloons](#)

Steven Novella

[Attitudes Predict CAM Use](#)

## Forbes

Steven Salzberg

[Large Study Finds MMR Vaccine Doesn't Cause Autism, And May Lower Autism Risk](#)

## How you can help FSM:

Please let **FSM** know if you have published any relevant articles, been on radio or TV (with links, if possible), or any of your activities that support the objectives of Friends of Science in Medicine.

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### Looking for FSM Friends with literature review skills.

FSM is keen to build up evidence-based resources about alternative and complementary therapies.

Claims for efficacy are usually anecdotal and better quality evidence than this is needed.

We need a brief summary of the results of randomised control trials, their quality or lack of data for all alternative therapies. Information sought includes efficacy and side effects of treatments and the best sources referenced e.g. Cochrane reviews.

There are no registers of adverse events internationally or in Australia for alternative therapies and the regulatory boards do not want to regulate clinical therapies if there is no evidence of harm. As well as seeking evidence of efficacy, **FSM wishes to start a register of well-documented adverse outcomes following specific alternative therapies** e.g. stroke following neck manipulation in any age group, adverse reactions to naturopathic therapies, death directly attributable to alternative therapies etc. Other adverse outcomes may have arisen because of recommendations from alternative therapists to stop or not use conventional therapies e.g. vaccination, diabetic therapies.

FSM is keen to form an advisory committee on evidence for and against alternative therapies and to clarify where quality data on alternative treatments do or do not exist.

The positions are purely honorary, and will furnish information of considerable value in framing arguments that assist in better health outcomes and economies for Australians.

If you would like to contribute to this initiative in your own time and discuss the objectives please e-mail [scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com.au](mailto:scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com.au)



[www.scienceinmedicine.org.au](http://www.scienceinmedicine.org.au)



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PO Box 631, Morayfield, QLD, 4506